

Value-Added Dairy Professional Development Scholarship Program Guidelines

Released August 24, 2023

Overview

Through USDA Dairy Business Innovation Initiative resources, UT Extension is pleased to provide opportunities to value-added dairy producers or key personnel in Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee to participate in a premier professional development opportunity. Selected individuals will be reimbursed up to \$2,500 to help defray registration and selected travel expenses to attend the 2024 NAFDMA Agritourism Convention and Expo in Boston, Massachusetts and vicinity February 1-5, 2024. Six scholarships are available for 2024. The conference and expo provide opportunities to producers to improve direct farm marketing operations through educational sessions, farm tours and networking events.

Learn more about the NAFDMA Agritourism Convention and Expo as information becomes available at www.nafdma.com.

Eligibility Requirements

Owners, managers or key personnel of the following operation types located in Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee are eligible to apply:

1. Existing value-added dairy (cattle, sheep or goat) operations producing and marketing value-added dairy products such as fluid milk, butter, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, soaps, lotions, other cosmetics, etc. If products for human consumption are being produced, the operation must be a licensed dairy product manufacturer.
2. Operations working toward becoming licensed dairy product manufacturer within the next 12 months.

A Brief Convention Overview

Details of the 2024 NAFDMA Convention and Expo are expected to be available when registration opens in mid-September. The scholarship application period is open before details are released because some registration options have sold out rather quickly in the last couple of years. A few notes about how the conference has operated in the past may be helpful as producers evaluate whether to apply and in developing applications.

The convention will take place across five days with four different components:

1. Pre-conference/bonus workshop or tour day
2. Farm/business tour day
3. Expo/trade show day with opportunities to network with show vendors and other participants
4. Two "Education Days" filled with several options for educational sessions

NAFDMA offers several registration options. Typically, there are options for only the two education days, only the expo day, only the bus tour day and then combinations of these activities. There is also, typically, an option for a "Complete Convention & Expo Package" that includes the two education days, expo day and, and tour day. Finally, there is an option to add on the Bonus Day workshop or activity.

Registration is pricier than many conferences. Registration fees are tiered so the earlier a person registers, the cheaper the fees. NAFDMA members also have lower registration fees than for non-members. In 2023, the Complete Convention & Expo fee for non-members was \$1,395 at early bird pricing and the bonus day opportunities were \$395-495. The Education Days and Expo Package was \$1,195.

Note that scholarship recipients must register for and participate in at least the two Education Days of the convention.

Scholarship Benefits and Requirements

- Up to \$2,500 will be reimbursed to scholarship recipients following the conference in accordance with University of Tennessee travel policy.
- Recipients will be required to attend a pre-conference orientation webinar and meet and greet event during the convention to help them get the most out of the experience. The meet and greet event is likely to be held on the evening of February 1.
- Recipients will be required to share lessons learned through the conference during an educational webinar for other producers and industry partners.
- Conference-related expenses eligible for reimbursement include:
 - Conference registration – conference sessions, farm tours, and trade show, etc. Recipients must register for and participate in at least the two “Education Days” of the conference. Participation in Bonus Day workshops/tours, farm tour day or the expo/trade show day is encouraged but not required.
 - Lodging: Lodging expenses are allowable for reimbursement if rates and stay dates meet policy requirements. If staying at the official conference hotel, only the conference rate or less is reimbursable. (The conference rate is expected to be \$149 per night plus any additional taxes and fees.) For other non-conference accommodations, reimbursement will be at federal conus rates for the location and date of the stay.
 - Mileage to the conference hotel or economy airfare: Mileage will be reimbursed at the rate allowed by policy at the time of the trip. (Current mileage reimbursement rate is \$0.655 per mile.)
 - Expenses associated with arriving early or staying in the area following the conference are not eligible for reimbursement. For example, if a scholarship recipient travels to Boston on January 31 but is not registered to participate in conference activities until February 2, then lodging for the night of January 31 is not eligible for reimbursement. If flying, scholarship recipients must also provide documentation of what flight costs would have been if they would have flown without the added day(s) of travel.
 - Transportation between the airport and conference hotel (such as a shuttle, taxi, UBER/Lyft), if needed.
 - Parking fees (airport or hotel).
 - Questions about travel reimbursement policy (lodging, airfare/mileage, extra days of travel) may be directed to Kim Giorgio at kagiorgio@utk.edu.
- NAFDMA membership fees and meals are not reimbursable, although most meals are typically included in conference registration.
- Recipients are responsible for registering for the conference and making hotel and travel reservations. Early registration is highly encouraged as the event often sells out. Registration is expected to open in mid-September 2023.
- Recipients must attend and participate in the conference in order to be eligible for reimbursement.
- Reimbursement request must be submitted by February 28, 2024.

Expense Reimbursement Procedure

Funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis. Upon selection, recipients will be asked to provide information to be used to register each as a Guest Traveler in the UT accounting system. Recipients will collect documentation (receipts, etc.) needed for reimbursement as they register for the conference and pay for eligible travel expenses. At the conclusion of the convention, recipients will complete a form requesting reimbursement with details of expenses. This form will be submitted with receipts and other documentation by February 28, 2024.

Final instructions for submitting reimbursement requests will be provided to recipients just prior to the conference. Reimbursements will be issued through the University of Tennessee and take approximately two weeks once all the appropriate documentation is submitted. (The sooner the necessary paperwork is submitted, the sooner reimbursement will be received.) This procedure and documentation needed will be discussed during the pre-conference webinar as well.

The maximum reimbursement is \$2,500 per scholarship recipient.

Application Process

Complete the brief application form online at tiny.utk.edu/scholarship. The scholarship selection committee may begin evaluating applicants on September 20, 2023. Scholarship recipients will be notified via the email address provided in their application once selections are made.

The application requests contact information and for applicants to briefly describe:

- Their existing or developing value-added dairy operation
- Their role within the value-added dairy operation
- How they expect this opportunity will help them improve their operation
- An estimate of expenses that will likely be submitted for reimbursement (example provided to right.)

I expect to request reimbursement for \$2,500 for the following estimated expenses:

1. Registration for complete convention for NAFDMA members - \$1,195
2. Mileage to/from airport (100 miles at \$0.625 per mile) = \$62.50
3. Airfare from Nashville, TN to Boston, MA = \$400
4. Airport/hotel transportation = \$75
5. Lodging (\$169 per night, estimate 20% taxes and fees, 6 nights) = \$1,217
6. Airport Parking (\$15 per day * 7 days) = \$105

Total expected expenses = \$3,054.50

Selection of Scholarship Recipients

Priority of selection will be given to existing, permitted value-added dairy operations, if permitting is applicable. Efforts will be made to select one or more recipients from each state (Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee), representatives from as many operations as possible, and different species of dairy livestock (cattle, sheep, goats). Scholarships will likely be limited to one per farm/business. If not enough applicants are received, the opportunity may be opened to producers in all states covered by the Southeast Dairy Business Initiative and/or more than one producer per operation.

Questions?

If you have questions about the scholarship opportunity or application, contact Troy Dugger at pdugger2@utk.edu or 931-486-2777.

If you have questions about Guest Traveler registration, travel policies or reimbursement procedures, contact Kim Giorgio at kagiorgio@utk.edu or 931-486-2777.

Acknowledgement

Funding for the 2024 Value-Added Dairy Professional Development Scholarship Program was made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service through grant AM21DBITN005. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.



AG.TENNESSEE.EDU